

# THE SEASON OF LENT

The season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and concludes on Thursday of Holy Week. It thus includes six Sundays, the five Sundays of Lent plus Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord.

The first preface for Lent calls it a "gracious gift" and speaks of the joy of the faithful as they "await the sacred paschal feasts". These few words provide a key to the meaning of Lent. It is not an autonomous or self-contained time. It looks beyond itself to the celebration of the paschal mystery of Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection. This makes it a season of grace inviting us to prepare for immersion in the dying and rising of Jesus Christ.

For those already baptised, Lent is a time for renewing and deepening their Christian commitment. For those preparing for baptism, now called "the elect", Lent is a time of purification and enlightenment. On their journey of conversion the baptised and the elect offer each other mutual support and inspiration.

Every year the first two Sundays of Lent recall Jesus' testing in the wilderness and his transfiguration on the mountain. Over the remaining Sundays in Year B we hear significant stories from the gospel of John: Jesus' cleansing of the temple, his dialogue with Nicodemus, and John's alternative account of Jesus' agony in the garden.

During Lent the readings from the Old Testament record significant events in the history of salvation. The second reading, all but one from the letters of Paul, is intended to connect with the other readings and shed light on the meaning of Lent.

The following table shows the selection of readings for the Sundays of Lent. **Year B is in bold.**

SUNDAY	YEAR	FIRST READING	SECOND READING	GOSPEL
<b>First</b> <i>Temptations of Christ</i>	A	Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7 <i>Creation and Fall</i>	Romans 5:12-19 <i>Sin and Grace</i>	Matthew 4:1-11 <i>Temptations</i>
	<b>B</b>	<b>Genesis 9:8-15</b> <b><i>Deluge and Covenant</i></b>	<b>1 Peter 3:18-22</b> <b><i>Deluge: image of Baptism</i></b>	<b>Mark 1:12-15</b> <b><i>Temptations</i></b>
	C	Deuteronomy 26:4-10 <i>Faith of Israel</i>	Romans 10:8-13 <i>Faith in Christ</i>	Luke 4:1-13 <i>Temptations</i>
<b>Second</b> <i>Transfiguration of Christ</i>	A	Genesis 12:1-4 <i>Call of Abraham</i>	2 Timothy 1:8-10 <i>Our call to holiness</i>	Matthew 17:1-9 <i>Transfiguration</i>
	<b>B</b>	<b>Genesis 22: 1-2, 9-13, 15-18</b> <b><i>Sacrifice of Abraham</i></b>	<b>Romans 8:31-34</b> <b><i>God gave his Son for our sake</i></b>	<b>Mark 9:2-10</b> <b><i>Transfiguration</i></b>
	C	Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18 <i>Abraham's faith: covenant</i>	Philippians 3:17 - 4:1 <i>Our transfigured bodies</i>	Luke 9:28-36 <i>Transfiguration</i>
<b>Third</b> <i>Living water</i>	A	Exodus 17:3-7 <i>Israel's waters of despair</i>	Romans 5:1-2, 5-8 <i>God's love poured into us</i>	John 4:5-42 <i>Samaritan woman</i>
	<b>B</b>	<b>Exodus 20:1-17</b> <b><i>The law given to Moses</i></b>	<b>1 Corinthians 1:22-25</b> <b><i>A crucified Messiah</i></b>	<b>John 2:13-25</b> <b><i>Destroy this temple</i></b>
	C	Exodus 3:1-8, 13-15 <i>The Lord rescues the people</i>	1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12 <i>The desert an example for us</i>	Luke 13:1-9 <i>Be converted or perish</i>
<b>Fourth</b> <i>Darkness to light</i>	A	1 Samuel 16: 1, 6-7, 10-13 <i>Anointing of David</i>	Ephesians 5:8-14 <i>Children of the light</i>	John 9:1-41 <i>Man born blind</i>
	<b>B</b>	<b>2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23</b> <b><i>Exile and liberation</i></b>	<b>Ephesians 2:4-10</b> <b><i>Dead to sin alive by grace</i></b>	<b>John 3:14-21</b> <b><i>The Son comes to save</i></b>
	C	Joshua 5:9-12 <i>Passover - the promised land</i>	2 Corinthians 5:17-21 <i>Reconciled to God in Christ</i>	Luke 15:1-3, 11-32 <i>The prodigal son</i>
<b>Fifth</b> <i>Death to life</i>	A	Ezekiel 37:12-14 <i>I will put my spirit in you</i>	Romans 8:8-11 <i>The Spirit dwells in you</i>	John 11:1-45 <i>Raising of Lazarus</i>
	<b>B</b>	<b>Jeremiah 31:31-34</b> <b><i>The covenant of forgiveness</i></b>	<b>Hebrews 5:7-9</b> <b><i>Christ's obedience - life</i></b>	<b>John 12:20-30</b> <b><i>The grain of wheat</i></b>
	C	Isaiah 43:16-21 <i>A new world is here</i>	Philippians 3:8-14 <i>Rising with Christ</i>	John 8:1-11 <i>Woman taken in adultery</i>
<b>Passion Sunday</b>	A	<b>Isaiah 50:4-7</b>	<b>Philippians 2:6-11</b>	Matthew 26:14 - 27:66 <i>The Passion account</i>
	<b>B</b>	<b><i>I did not cover my face against insult</i></b>	<b><i>He humbled himself to become like us and God raised him up</i></b>	<b>Mark 14:1 - 15:47</b> <b><i>The Passion account</i></b>
	C			Luke 22:14 - 23:56 <i>The Passion account</i>